

Message Text

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ACTION AF-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02

SS-15 USIA-06 MCT-01 ACDA-07 /076 W

-----131417Z 101274 /50

P R 131250Z MAY 77

FM AMEMBASSY FREETOWN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5351

INFO AMEMBASSY ABIDJAN

AMEMBASSY ACCRA

AMEMBASSY CONAKRY

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY LAGOS

AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY MONROVIA

LIMITED OFFICIAL USE FREETOWN 1519

LONDON FOR SEITZ

EO 11652: NA

TAGS: PINS, PINT, SL

SUBJ: PARLIAMENT MEETS--OPPOSITION ABSENT

REF: FREETOWN 1475

1. BEGIN SUMMARY: SIERRA LEONE PARLIAMENT CONVENED THURSDAY, MAY 12, TO ELECT SPEAKER AND SWEAR IN MEMBERS. ALL SLPP OPPOSITION MEMBERS WERE ABSENT. PERSISTENT AND WIDESPREAD RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING THAT APC INTENDS TERRORIZE BO PRIOR TO MAY 20 ELECTIONS. BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION AND AMERICAN EMBASSY JOINTLY TAKING PRECAUTIONS. SIERRA LEONE LABOR CONGRESS REMAINS MUTE ON OUTCOME OF ELECTION. NEW CABINET NOT EXPECTED TO BE ANNOUNCED UNTIL AFTER BO ELECTIONS. END SUMMARY.

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2. THE FOURTH PARLIAMENT IN SIERRA LEONE'S HISTORY CONVENED MAY 12 AND ALL FIFTEEN MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION WERE ABSENT. RULING APC APRLIAMENTARIANS CHARGED SLPP WAS BOYCOTTING PARLIAMENT AND URGED OPPOSITION MEMBERS TO ATTEND. SLPP SUPPORTERS CLAIM THEY WERE FORCED TO STAY AWAY FROM OPENING SESSION BECAUSE OF NUMEROUS THREATS THEY RECEIVED AND

LACK OF ASSURANCE THAT POLICE WOULD PROTECT THEM. RETIRED SUPREME COURT JUSTICE SINGER C.W. BETTS WAS ELECTED SPEAKER OF PARLIAMENT. ELECTION OF DEPUTY SPEAKER, WHO NORMALLY IS CHOSEN FROM PARLIAMENT, WAS DEFERRED PENDING ELECTIONS IN BO DISTRICT NOW SCHEDULED FOR MAY 20. FOLLOWING SWEARING IN CEREMONY OF ALL 77 APC MEMBERS, PARLIAMENT ADJOURNED UNTIL JUNE 3.

3. WIDESPREAD AND PERSISTENT RUMORS ARE CIRCULATING IN FREE-TOWN AND BO THAT LARGE FORCE OF APC THUGS AND ISU ARE GOING TO ATTACK BO TO SEEK REVENGE FOR DEATHS OF APC SUPPORTERS IN BO DISTRICT (FREETOWN 1436). FRIGHTENED RESIDENTS OF BO CLAIM APC PLANS TO SEND IN SOME 1200 APC HENCHMEN AND SOME 500 ISU TO TERRORIZE THE CITY. SOME APC POLITICANS APPARENTLY BELIEVE THIS TO BE TRUE. ONE APC PARLIAMENTARY CANDIDATE FOR BO CONFIDENTLY TOLD EMBOFF AT PARLIAMENTARY OPENING THAT ALL NOMINATIONS IN BO WOULD BE DECLARED NULL AND VOID, NEW NOMINATIONS WOULD BE REQUIRED, AND THAT APC INTENDS TO INSURE ALL ITS CANDIDATES WILL BE RETURNED UNOPPOSED BY FLOODING BO WITH APC SUPPORTERS ON NOMINATION DAY AND PREVENTING SLPP CANDIDATES FROM REFILING.

4. KNOWLEDGEABLE LAWYERS INSIST THIS COURSE OF ACTION WOULD BE UNCONSTITUTIONAL. NEVERTHELESS, IN VIEW ENTIRE CONDUCT OF NOMINATIONS AND ELECTIONS, THIS EMBASSY AND BRITISH HIGH COMMISSION JOINTLY ARE TAKING PRECAUTIONARY MEASURES. BOTH BRITISH AND AMERICAN CITIZENS IN BO DISTRICT ARE BEING ADVISED BY WARDENS TO STOCK UP ON WEEK'S SUPPLY OF FOOD AND WATER AND TO BE PREPARED TO STAY AT HOME AT FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE.
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THREE PEACE CORPS VOLUNTEERS LIVING IN CROWDED CENTER OF BO ARE BEING RELOCATED TO SAFER QUARTERS IN OTHER PARTS OF THE CITY. ON FRIDAY, MAY 13, BRITISH DEPUTY HIGH COMMISSIONER AND AMERICAN VICE CONSUL WILL VISIT BO FOR ON-THE-SPOT OBSERVATIONS AND DISCUSSIONS WITH GOSL OFFICIALS.

5. SIERRA LEONE LABOR CONGRESS (SLCC) EXECUTIVE BOARD MET ON WEDNESDAY, MAY 11, AND WAS UNABLE TO AGREE TO A DECLARATION EITHER CONDEMNING CONDUCT OF ELECTIONS OR CONGRATULATING APC ON VICTORY. ANTI-APC MEMBERS OF SLCC CONTENTED THEMSELVES WITH REISSUING NUMBER OF EARLIER STATEMENTS CONDEMNING APC.

6. ANNOUNCEMENT OF NEW CABINET IS EXPECTED TO BE DEFERRED UNTIL AFTER ELECTIONS IN BO. NEW CABINET IS RUMORED TO BE CONSIDERABLY SMALLER THAN LAST CABINET.
NORTH

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NNN

Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
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Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
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Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
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